

POLITICS

Happy anniversary: what a difference a year makes

PM's weaknesses exposed by election gamble. By **Nigel Morris**

On the eve of her first anniversary of becoming Prime Minister, Theresa May has been given a brutal reminder of the dramatic decline in her political stock.

The image of the Prime Minister – until recently considered her party's greatest asset – has been quietly dropped from the front page of the Conservative website.

In the Commons, a Labour MP said its removal proved that she had gone from being "the next Iron Lady to the lady vanishes".

Mrs May was not even in the chamber to receive the insult, leaving the First Secretary of State Damian Green to deputise for her while she greeted the King of Spain on his state visit to Britain.

She will mark her year in office today by hosting a lunch for the king and conducting a radio interview, but there will be no formal celebrations to commemorate the day.

In her quieter moments, she reflects on how it has all gone so wrong since she pledged outside Downing Street 365 days ago to

tackle injustice and vested interests and stand up for people who are "just about managing".

Until her disastrous election gamble, she was the dominant figure in British politics, facing little criticism within the party as she attempted to carve out a distinctive social agenda.

Despite court battles and parliamentary skirmishing, she eventually won overwhelming backing for triggering Article 50.

Her weaknesses had been on display throughout the year – notably the robotic style symbolised by her repetition of her "Brexit means Brexit" mantra, and misjudgements such as her controversial state visit invitation to Donald Trump.

But she went into her snap election from a position of extraordinary strength with the Conservatives holding an overwhelming poll lead over Labour.

Her popularity so outstripped Jeremy Corbyn's that the party opted to focus heavily on her strength of personality.

And then a faltering performance



Theresa May pictured arriving at 10 Downing Street in happier times GETTY

by Mrs May and an inept Tory strategy combined with Labour's popular policy and Mr Corbyn's evident confidence on the election trail to produce the biggest electoral surprise for decades.

At 10pm on 8 June, the Prime Minister's political standing collapsed and her travails since – cobbling together an electoral pact with the DUP and her clumsy response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy – have done nothing to help.

The main question confronting Mrs May today is how long she can survive in office. And that is nothing to celebrate.

May's progress The ups and downs

13 July 2016 Appointed Prime Minister after rival Andrea Leadsom drops out of the Conservative Party leadership race.

5 October Hailed at the Tory conference as she tells activists that her "party of workers" can seize the political "centre ground".

27 January 2017 Becomes the first foreign leader to meet Donald Trump at the White House.

29 March Wins overwhelming parliamentary backing for triggering Article 50.

18 April Calls snap election.

18 May Publication of Conservative manifesto – including plans for a "dementia tax" and to scrap free school dinners – begins the slide in Tory support.

22 May Dementia tax U-turn provokes ridicule.

8 June Tory majority wiped out as Labour surges in election.

15 June May attacked over her response to the Grenfell Tower blaze.

26 June Heavily criticised "confidence and supply" deal with DUP is signed.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD No 2006 BY MORPH

ACROSS

- 6 In the middle of punt, eating chocolate bar (7)
8 Fitting connecting plug and other terminals (7)
10 Is getting out of practice ... on the other hand, has desire (5)
11 Runs off around 50 duck fillets (9)
12 I'm amazed to comprehend awful drivell making outlook on life (5-4)
13 A second series of games giving advantage (5)

- 15 Ashes perhaps provide spur for one who's handy with the willow? (4,7)
19 Guarantee on wine bottles Department of Health provided for this purpose (2,3)
20 Mercilessness of Japanese theatre district (2,7)
22 Holding election is hard, getting ways to attract attention for the masses (3,6)
24 Joint episcopal head may come under this (5)
25 One having big bill in place that's falling apart (7)
26 Non-kosher ingredient for cooking plant (7)

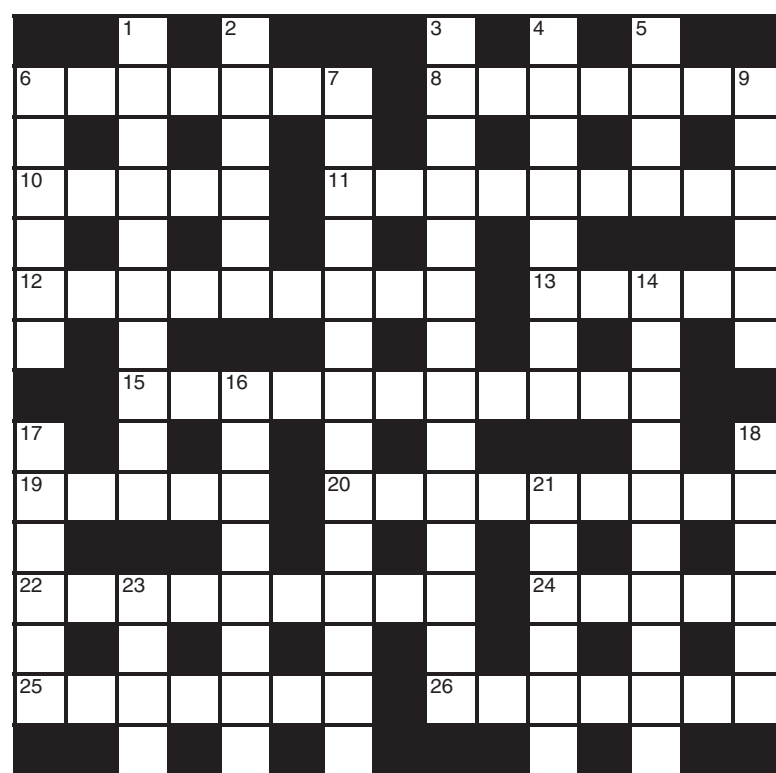
- 4 High time to get drink? It's unbelievable (4,4)
5 Animals launched in one stage of flight (4)
6 What's British local leader in control over? (6)
7 Apeman that could prevent site access? (3,7,4)
9 Does paper over cracked centre of plaster, sized (6)
14 A French tart picked up in Swiss town for public health (10)
16 Barrier missing both ends – pest to intrude (8)
17 Felt good, getting husband in to do housework (4,2)
18 Every other word in Noel's show is a distressing experience (6)
21 Greek war leader controlling military intelligence bodies (6)
23 I put off odd characters in a careless manner (4)

DOWN

- 1 Mad Hatter cast with difficulty (2,1,7)
2 Got rid of soap actor finally – Den is murdered (6)
3 Scrap job and leave, introducing learner as cover (9,5)

Solution to yesterday's Cryptic

HOAXER ROASTING
A N A M A N O
LATEST KNIGHTLY
F E T U I A A I
BARRENESS ACES
A I N C H D T H
CROWDPLEASER
K R E A M P F U
W M S S L E X G
AGED TIGERSNAKE
R R F F S S T N
HELLENIC MAOIST
O I L E N O L
LANDLADY STINGY



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